

Dear Friend,

Throughout our nation's history, America has been a shining city on a hill to the rest of the world – a representation of what freedom and a democratic system of government can produce. And we have the men and women of our Armed Forces to thank for it. From the First World War to World War II, Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan, our military has been the force protecting our nation and way of life. On Veterans Day, we honor those who have served and, as always, remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our freedoms.

I know that many have loved ones serving abroad and are praying for their safe return. Right now, there are approximately 22.7 million veterans in America. Nearly 2 million of those are living in California, and our Congressional District is home to one of the highest concentrations of veterans in the state – nearly 55,000. Just a few examples of the courageous individuals from our communities who have answered the call to defend America include: Lance Corporal Charles "Dillon" Miller, who was wounded in Afghanistan and returned to San Luis Obispo in July; highly decorated Korean War veteran Larry Ybanez who continues to give his time assisting fellow veterans; Iraq War veterans Jeremy Staat and Wesley Barrientos, who are gearing up to ride across the country from the Wall of Valor Memorial in Bakersfield to the Vietnam Memorial in Washington D.C. to unify our nation's vets; and Ashleigh Martel, a veteran of the Iraq War who now works at the Kern County Veteran Services Department.

The men and women that have served our country deserve our gratitude for the sacrifices they and their families have made to ensure we can wake every morning to a nation full of endless possibility; a nation where we can pursue and achieve our dreams. One way we can demonstrate our gratitude is to ensure that those who have served receive the benefits they earned. This past August, legislation I voted for was signed into law to ensure that veterans receiving tuition aid under the GI bill continue to receive the funding they are entitled to. I was also pleased to vote for legislation to improve job training programs and employment opportunities for our veterans. In addition, I recently requested an independent audit to get to the bottom of the continued backlog and delays our local veterans have been experiencing with their health care in our region.

As we take a moment to remember those who have answered the call of duty, let us renew our commitment to honor them when they return home. We are a grateful nation and I know our communities especially will always make sure that our veterans are shown our heartfelt appreciation. I encourage everyone to take a moment to thank a veteran for their service this

Veterans Day and to reflect upon the opportunities afforded us because of their sacrifice.

Sincerely,

Congressman Kevin McCarthy